

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

This Amendment is responsive to the Office Action mailed on November 16, 2005.

Applicants are submitting herewith a Supplemental Information Disclosure Statement. Consideration of the references cited in the Supplemental IDS is requested, and Applicants request that the appropriate PTO forms be initiated by the Examiner and returned to the undersigned.

Prior to this Amendment, claims 1-113 were canceled and claims 114-126 were pending. In this Amendment, claim 114 is canceled, claims 115-126 are amended, and new dependent claims 127-144 are added so that claims 115-144 are pending and subject to examination.

Claims 115, 120, and 125 are amended so that they are in independent form. Other previously pending claims are amended so that they depend from these independent claims.

At section 1 of the Office Action, the Examiner indicates that claim 126 recites a "flange" and that claim 126 is withdrawn from consideration, because it allegedly does not correspond to the elected invention. Applicants disagree and do not admit that the Examiner's position is correct. However, as will be explained below, to expedite the prosecution, dependent claim 126 is now amended to depend from allowable independent claim 125. Other claims which recite the word "flange" also depend from allowable independent claims. As noted at page 2 of the Office Action mailed on July 25, 2005, upon allowance of a generic claim, Applicants are entitled to consideration of claims to additional species which are written in dependent form. Accordingly, Applicants request that any alleged species claims which depend from allowable generic claims be allowed.

Claims 114, 116-119, 121, 123, and 124 are rejected as being anticipated by, or in the alternative, obvious under 35 U.S.C. 103(c) over Carl 5,381,685 in view of Wilson 5,023,232. Claim 122 is rejected as being obvious over Carl '685 in view of Wilson '232, as applied to claim 114 above and further in view of Sisler. These rejections are traversed.

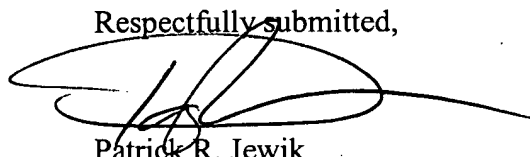
However, to expedite the prosecution of this application, claims 115, 120, and 125 are amended so that they are in independent form. All other claims depend from these independent claims. As noted at page 4 of the Office Action, claims 115, 120, and 125 are objected to and contain allowable subject matter. Accordingly, all claims should be in condition for allowance. The Examiner is sincerely and earnestly thanked for the indication of allowable subject matter.

Although Applicants have amended the claims so that they are in condition for allowance, Applicants reserve the right to file a continuation application to pursue the subject matter of the canceled claims. Applicants continue to traverse the basis for the Examiner's rejections and may address the Examiner's arguments in detail in a subsequently filed continuation application.

CONCLUSION

Applicants believe all claims now pending in this Application are in condition for allowance, and a Notice of Allowance is respectfully solicited. Should any remaining issues preclude allowability in this application, the Examiner is requested to call the undersigned at 415-576-0200.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrick R. Jewik', is written over a large, loopy oval shape.

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